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# Public Support for State Redistribution in Western and Central Eastern European Countries

## A Cross-National Comparative Trend Analysis

*Anja Eder*

### Introduction:

#### Increasing Inequalities and Public Support for State Redistribution

Even before the recent worldwide economic crisis, the distribution of incomes in many OECD countries has become more unequal during a period of economic growth and high employment since the 1970s and 1980s (OECD 2015). Whereas in the 1980s the top 10% of the population earned 7 times as much as the lowest 10%, in the early 2000s, the top 10% earned nearly 10 times, and today earn the “highest since records began” (OECD 2015). From this trend, several scholars have concluded the historical phase of equalization has ended (e.g., Alderson and Nielsen 2002; Grusky 2001; Nollmann 2006). Simultaneously, Western countries established third way policies (Giddens 1998) that make welfare benefits increasingly conditional to guarantee “economic dynamism as well as social justice” (Powell and Barrientos 2004, 12). During this period, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) established democratic and free economies, accompanied by extensive capitalization and privatization (Kollmorgen 2009, 76). Today, CEE countries are among the countries worldwide that have the highest between-country variation in inequality (Haller et al. 2016); however, average economic prosperity is still lower than in Western Europe (Aidukaite 2011, 212).

Against the background of these developments, this chapter focuses on the question to what extent people think that *their governments are responsible for reducing income differences*, according to data from the ISSP Module on Social Inequality (International Social Survey Programme). Public support plays a decisive role in political decisions and directly or indirectly influences social structural changes (e.g., Burstein 2003; Brooks and Manza 2006). In democratic societies, voters have the opportunity to choose between political parties that are more or less prone to redistributive policies. In addition, from a historical perspective, it is clear that people’s convictions and values have always been decisive regarding the strength of labor unions, leftist and conservative political parties and the establishment of different types of welfare states across countries (Esping-Andersen 1990). This chapter pays special attention to potential changes in preferences for state redistribution throughout the 1990s and 2000s and to contrasts between countries and ideal-typical

welfare state regimes during a period of increasing income inequality, growing global economic competition and East European post-socialism.

Previous research has focused on different hypotheses to explain the variation across countries and time. The present chapter aims to identify the explanatory power of three hypotheses: (1) the regime hypothesis, (2) the hypothesis of normative accommodation, and (3) government protection thesis. According to the regime hypothesis, support for state redistribution depends on historically grown and stable dominant values within specific welfare state regimes. In contrast, normative accommodation includes learning processes, leading to a delayed change in expectations and attitudes toward state redistribution, whereas the government protection thesis focuses on the perceived need for state redistribution depending on the actual level of prosperity and the degree of unemployment and social spending within countries.

Based on the regime hypothesis, countries were selected as representatives of G. Esping-Andersen's ideal-typical welfare-state regimes (WFS): Norway (NO) and Sweden (SE) as representatives of social democratic WFS, West Germany (W-DE) and Austria (AT) as conservative/corporatist WFS and the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand (NZ) and Australia (AU) as liberal WFS. In addition, NZ, UK and AU were treated as a subtype of the liberal WFS, namely, as "radical WFS" (Castles and Mitchell 1993). However, special attention should be paid to the potential differences between Eastern and Western European countries across time. Therefore, the typology includes seven contrasting CEE countries: Russia (RU), Poland (PL), Bulgaria (BG), the Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (HU), Slovakia (SK), and Slovenia (SI), as well as the special case of East Germany (E-DE).<sup>1</sup>

For these countries, varying trends of income inequality at different levels are clear (see Table 1). Gini coefficients indicate the strongest increase at the beginning of the 1990s in the CEE countries, particularly in Russia and Bulgaria, and a remarkable heterogeneity among the CEE countries. In the Western European countries, income gaps widened to a lower degree and have always been biggest in the liberal WFS and smallest in the social-democratic WFS. Increasing inequalities are the most distinct pattern at the beginning of the 1990s, followed by comparably minor decreases in the late 1990s in the CEE countries.

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1 The South European welfare state type (*rudimentary type* per Gelissen 2002) is not included in the analyses because countries such as Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal did not participate in all three survey waves.

**Table 1** Income inequality and average changes in income inequality across countries and time

	NO	SE	DE	AT	US	UK	NZ	AU	RU	PL	BG	CZ	HU	SK	SI
<b>Level of income inequality (Gini coefficients)</b>															
av. 1990–1995	23	22	27	29	35	34	32	30	38	28	27	22	30	20	21
av. 1997–2001	24	23	27	26	37	34	33	31	41	29	29	25	29	25	23
av. 2007–2011	23	24	29	27	37	36	32	34	41	31	33	25	27	26	24
<b>Changes in income inequality (percentage points)</b>															
1988–1994	-0.4	1.2	1.0	3.5	2.2	2.5	4.5	0.1	18.4	2.6	7.8	5.0	7.4	3.1	4.2
1995–2001	2.1	1.7	0.1	-1.6	0.9	-0.4	0.4	0.9	-4.3	-3.2	-1.8	1.6	-3.7	3.3	-0.7
2002–2011	-2.0	0.5	1.1	1.3	0.1	1.5	-0.7	3.4	1.5	1.7	7.7	-1.7	-0.4	-0.6	2.8

Gini coefficients of Household Incomes after Taxes and Transfers (average Gini coefficients and changes in the Gini coefficients in percentage points)

Source: Frederick Solt (2009): Standardized World Income Inequality Database, Version 4\_1

The ISSP surveys were conducted in 1992, 1999 and 2009.

## The Regime Hypothesis: Historically Grown Worlds of Welfare State Attitudes

One of the most prominent approaches to explain country differences in public support for state redistribution is the *regime hypothesis*, which starts from the assumption of a formative effect of a country's historically grown welfare state institutions (Gelissen 2002). "The identities and interests of social actors are (...) created in a process where the institutional framework within which people act, and the historical traditions through which events and processes are interpreted, have a decisive impact" (Svallfors 1997, 291). Welfare state institutions directly influence people's life chances and incorporate distributive norms and standards of social justice. Thus, these institutions are normative settings and constitute a frame for political action and social conflicts (e.g., Mau 2004).

From this institutional-historical perspective, people's views of state redistribution are stable across time, at least in western countries. Regarding country differences, there has been a lot of debate on the classification of Western countries; however, only little effort has been made concerning typologies for CEE countries. G. Esping-Andersen's (1990) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* is the most prominent approach to classifying different types of WFS in Western countries and even the work's numerous critics conclude that "there is plenty of reason to continue to work on and with the original or modified typologies" (Arts and Gelissen 2002, 137). Therefore, Esping-Andersen's classical typology of liberal, conservative and social-democratic regimes provides important theoretical arguments for the ongoing analyses. To sum up, state redistribution in *liberal* WFS is small, and individualism in a free market economy, where trade unions are weak and minimum wages and social assistance benefits are low, is predominant. This leads to the social cost of high inequality and poverty for the benefit of high economic and employment growth (Esping-

Andersen 1996, 15–18; Esping-Andersen et al. 2002, 15f.). Castles and Mitchell (1993) introduced the *radical welfare state* as a subtype of the liberal WFS, which is characterized by higher benefit equality, comparably higher taxes and stronger labor movements and distinguishes the UK, New Zealand and Australia from the US. However, several scholars described the UK as a “borderline case” (e.g., Svallfors 1997, 286) that cannot be clearly subsumed as a liberal or radical type of welfare state.

In *conservative* welfare states, de-commodification<sup>2</sup> is high, and the state takes far-reaching responsibility for the pension system, unemployment insurance and social assistance, financed by compulsory contributions. Conservative WFS, in particular, face problems of market rigidity, the “welfare without work trap” (Esping-Andersen et al. 2002, 17), early retirement that strains the pension system and insufficient integration of women in the labor market (2002, 16f.). In *social democratic* WFS, the state intervenes most extensively, and social benefits are universal (Esping-Andersen 1990; see also Sejersted 2011). Extraordinarily strong left-wing parties and labor unions contribute to the strength of egalitarianism. However, this regime is costly and relies on high employment and growth to manage the high tax requirements (Esping-Andersen et al. 2002, 14).

Despite a similar past of high de-commodification and minimal social inequality,<sup>3</sup> the CEE countries established varying social security systems during the course of the last two decades and today face highly differing levels of inequality (e.g., Aidukaite 2009). Esping-Andersen (1996) early claimed that the post-socialist countries would adapt to one of the Western worlds of welfare capitalism. However, recent research suggests mixed patterns of social-democratic, conservative-corporatist and neo-liberal policies within individual CEE countries (Fenger 2007; Kollmorgen 2009).

Table 2     Typologies of post-socialist welfare states based on M. Fenger’s (2007) and R. Kollmorgen’s (2009) work

	Typologies	Countries
Fenger (2007)	1. USSR	1. Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Baltic States
	2. Post-communist European	2. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia
	3. Developing type <sup>4</sup>	3. Romania, Moldova, Georgia
Kollmorgen (2009)	1. Rudimentary-state-paternalistic	1. Russia, Ukraine
	2. State-led conservative-corporatist	2. Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia
	3. Neoliberal-social democratic	3. Estland, Lithuania

\* Fenger and Kollmorgen use different countries and methods in their typologies; therefore, comparability is limited. Nonetheless, they subsume the Baltic States to different welfare state types, Fenger to the USSR type and Kollmorgen to the neoliberal-social democratic type.

2 “De-commodification occurs when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market” (Esping-Andersen 1990, 21–22).

3 They also share a phase of ad-hoc reforms after 1989, followed by a phase of privatization (more extensive than in the West) and in the last few years re-orientation and consolidation where neo-liberal policies have been balancing out (Kollmorgen 2009, 85–87).

4 The developing type is not relevant for the ongoing analysis.

Table 2 shows two relevant welfare state typologies for the ongoing analyses: One typology considers Fenger's (2007) former *USSR type* and Kollmorgen's (2009) *rudimentary state-paternalistic type*. In the USSR-type, government expenditures are similar to those in conservative WFS; however, less protection is provided, leading to a distinctly worse social situation. This type is called rudimentary and state-paternalistic because it is an authoritarian state, and family networks and the subsistence economy are important (Kollmorgen 2009).<sup>5</sup> Whereas Kollmorgen attributes neoliberal programs in particular to the Baltic countries, several authors in the case of Russia speak of a "mix of neoliberal ideas and Soviet legacies and institutions" (Teplova 2007, 285).

The *post-communist European type* and the *state-led conservative-corporatist type* face better economic development and are more egalitarian than previously. Kollmorgen points out that in particular the Visegrád states (PL, SK, CZ, HU) and Slovenia established a mix of neoliberal policies and state-led social policies during the course of the countries' transformation (2009, 81). Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia followed a Bismarckian tradition and evolved towards conservative WFS (also see Aspalter et al. 2009, 180), whereas social protection is comparably lower in Slovakia (Aidukaite 2011, 216). Bulgaria, in particular, adopted extensive liberal policies while facing severe reductions in public health spending, and a deterioration in the pension system, contributing to a high risk of poverty for elderly citizens (Sotiropoulos et al. 2003).<sup>6</sup> A special case among the CEE countries is East Germany, which was integrated into the conservative regime of West Germany and the world economy much faster than any other post-socialist country (see also Riedl and Haller 2014).

In line with the regime hypothesis, previous research has shown that people in liberal welfare states supported state redistribution the least in the 1990s (e.g., Dallinger 2010). Findings regarding social democratic and conservative welfare states, however, are not consistent with the classical typologies: Support for redistribution is higher in conservative welfare states than in social democratic welfare states (Svallfors 1997, 288; Dallinger 2010, 340). In addition, the conservative welfare state of Germany confirmed its similarity to liberal welfare states in the 1990s (Dallinger 2010, 340), whereas support for redistribution was distinctly higher in Austria. Nonetheless, scholars argue that "welfare regimes affect both the mean and the variance in public support for state redistribution" (Jaeger 2009, 734). Previous results regarding post-socialist countries confirm more support for state redistribution than in Western European countries (Dallinger 2010, 340; Andreß and Heien 2001), although detailed analyses of heterogeneity are missing. Based on the classical and new typologies of welfare states for the CEE countries, the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses are formulated for the extended period throughout the 1990s and 2000s:

5 Additional characteristics are a comparably lower GDP and a high level of corruption (Ibid.).

6 Despite a low GDP, low social spending and high inequality and poverty risk, Bulgaria is included in this type.

*H1: Citizens of liberal welfare states least support state redistribution, followed by social democratic and conservative welfare states. The highest support for state redistribution is expected in post-socialist countries.*

- a) *The US is expected to be less prone to state redistribution than the UK, Australia and New Zealand (see liberal vs. radical WFS).*
- b) *Among the post-socialist countries, East Germany is expected to be least in favor of state redistribution, followed by Slovenia and the Visegrád states, whereas Bulgaria and Russia are expected to be the most likely to support state redistribution.*

## Processes of Normative Accommodation and the Subjective Need for State Redistribution

Whereas according to the regime hypothesis country differences in attitudes toward state redistribution are stable, several approaches offer different explanations for potential changes across time. One approach focuses on the processes of normative accommodation (e.g., Sachweh 2010, 64), meaning that people over time adapt their expectations to changed societal circumstances. Economic conditions might impact men's consciousness (e.g., Marx and Engels 1970 [1859]: 10). Thus, if inequality rises, people tend to legitimate the growing gaps between the wealthy and less wealthy and vote for less state redistribution, although with a specific time lag. This effect might be more likely in countries of high inequality. Alternative approaches concentrate on the factual need for state redistribution considering a country's affluence, level of unemployment, and public social spending. Under the government protection thesis, support for state redistribution is lower in countries where there is less need for government aid (Dallinger 2010; Blekesaune 2007). People in countries with high unemployment, for instance, perceive a higher risk of becoming unemployed, feel more concern for the unemployed, and are more in favor of state redistribution (e.g., Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003, 418).

Whereas normative accommodation includes cognitive learning processes, leading to a change in expectations delayed in time, the government protection thesis focuses on the perceived need for state redistribution, depending on the actual level of economic prosperity, unemployment, and social spending. Thus, both approaches focus on different starting conditions and causal mechanisms. The three approaches are not mutually exclusive (see Table 3): People might adapt their expectations to social structural changes; however, regime differences might remain. In addition, processes of normative accommodation and the government protection thesis are expected to hold for the highly unequal and least prosperous Bulgaria and Russia.

Recent findings show a mixed picture in answer to the question of people normatively accommodating to changing levels of inequality. Whereas according to the hypothesis, scholars report growing tolerance for inequality in times of rising inequalities (Gijssberts 2002, 281; Osberg and Smeeding 2006, 461), others confirm a distinct preference for more equality in Western European countries with comparably low but increasing levels of inequality (Hadler 2007; Kenworthy and McCall 2008). In turn, other analyses show no



relation between the actual level of income inequality and people's attitudes (e.g., Dallinger 2010). Particularly in the 1990s, a decrease in support for state redistribution was expected, mainly because the principle of individualism gained importance (e.g., Taylor-Gooby 2001). However, empirical analyses did not support this assumption; even in liberal welfare states, approval of state redistribution increased (e.g., Taylor-Gooby 1995). The most consistent result considers the increasing support for state redistribution in several CEE countries, where income inequality rose the most (e.g., Örkény and Székelyi 2000). Overall, scholars also report constant and distinctly high preferences for state redistribution as the leading pattern (e.g., Ullrich 2000). On the backdrop of those previous results, the relation between inequality and approval of state redistribution will be investigated anew for the extended period of the 1990s and 2000s.

*H2: In the sense of normative accommodation, increases in income inequality are expected to be related to a delayed decrease in approval of state redistribution. This pattern will be particularly strong in countries where the income gap widened strongly and the level of inequality is high, namely, in Russia, Bulgaria and in Hungary as well as in the US, the UK and New Zealand.*

In previous research, differences between Western and Eastern European countries were notably ascribed to varying levels of economic prosperity, and scholars concluded that “in transition countries high public expectations for state action aimed at more equality are the result of a weak economy [rather] than of post-socialist ideology” (Dallinger 2010, 345). From this perspective, economic growth and employment determine public support for state redistribution but not the level of income inequality per se (Dallinger 2010, 341). This explanation is far from the regime hypothesis of historically grown distributional norms and seems especially instructive for the analyses of the variation between the CEE countries. Are people in the economically more successful CEE countries, who face lower unemployment rates and higher social spending (Dallinger 2010), less likely to support state redistribution compared to people in the CEE countries worse off? The underlying assumption considers that subjective need for state redistribution depends on comparisons with the level of prosperity in other countries and to a lesser extent on the changes within the own country (e.g., Delhey and Kohler 2005). Since upward comparisons with more affluent countries are most likely (ibidem), subjective need in the less prosperous CEE-countries is expected to be highest at all three time points. In line with the government protection thesis, the following hypothesis is formulated for the extended period throughout the 1990s and 2000s:

*H3: People in more prosperous countries, facing comparably lower unemployment rates and higher social spending are less likely to support state redistribution throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Among the CEE countries, Bulgaria and Russia show the highest support, whereas East Germany, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic show the lowest support for state redistribution.*



Table 3     The regime hypothesis, processes of normative accommodation, and the government protection thesis in comparison

	Regime hypothesis	Normative accommodation	Government protection
Mechanism	Historically grown dominant values	Legitimizing due to adaptation of expectations to circumstances via learning	Dependent on a country's prosperity (and unemployment and social spending)
Changes across time	Stable ranking of countries (but adaptation of Visegrád countries to conservative regime)  -> no systematic changes across time (see H1)	Delayed cognitive adaptation to changes in circumstances  -> negative association between changes of inequality and public support for state redistribution (see H2)	Immediate reflection of actual level  -> higher levels of prosperity go hand in hand with less need for state redistribution (see H3)
Countries	<i>Rank order West (from least to most support):</i> Liberal (US, UK, NZ, AU) Conservative (AT, W-DE) Social-democratic (SE, NO)  <i>Rank order CEE (from least to most support):</i> East-Germany Visegrád countries and Slovenia, Bulgaria and Russia	Delayed accommodation (by the end of the 1990s) in countries with the highest increase and a high level of inequality, expected in: RU, BG, HU  Delayed accommodation (by the end of the 1990s) in countries with a mean increase but a high level of inequality, expected in: US, NZ, UK	More need in CEE than in Western European countries  Most need in BG and RU, lowest need among CEE countries in SI, CZ, E-DE

Data, Variables, and Methods

The following analyses are based on data from the ISSP module on Social Inequality (1992, 1999 and 2009). Countries were selected as ideal-typical representatives of social democratic, conservative and liberal welfare regimes and included seven CEE countries (see the Introduction). The total dataset included 57,807 respondents.

The main dependent variable considers the following item:

*It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes.*

*Respondents rated their approval on a five-point scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree).*

The scale was recoded so that higher values mean a higher preference for state redistribution.

The following items were also considered:

*Income differences in (country) are too large,*

*The government should provide a decent living standard for the unemployed, and*

*The government should spend less on benefits for the poor.*

*Answers again were on a five-point scale.*

Four macro-indicators were included in the analysis: (1.) The Gini coefficient of income distribution gives a general indication of the amount of income inequality within countries and varies (in principle) between a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 100. The Gini data stem from Frederick Solt's (2009) Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID). To look at processes of normative accommodation, changes in income inequality were taken into account and controlled for the level of income inequality. (2.) A country's economic prosperity was measured with the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in current U.S. dollars provided by the World Bank. In relation to the government protection thesis, (3.) unemployment rates from the World Bank<sup>7</sup> and (4.) the degree of public social protection expenditure as a percentage of the GDP per capita (including public social protection and health expenditure; see International Labour Organization 2014) were included. The same macro-indicators were used for West and East Germany.

This chapter provides a comprehensive descriptive analysis of the cross-country variation and temporal changes in attitudes toward state redistribution. Variance analyses and post-hoc tests (Games Howell, Dunett's T3, Tanhame's T2) were conducted to test differences across countries' welfare regimes. Table 4 and Figure 2 illustrate the relation between support for state redistribution and the selected macro-indicators across time.

## Public Support for State Redistribution Across Different Welfare State Regimes Throughout the 1990s and 2000s: The Regime Hypothesis

In the first step, people's views of the government's responsibility to reduce income differences across WFS regimes are examined. Figure 1 indicates three worlds of welfare state attitudes: Western European, Eastern European, and liberal views outside Europe. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, support for state redistribution is lowest in the liberal WFS (mean=3.2; SD=1.2) and highest in the CEE countries (mean=4.1; SD=1.1). Inconsistent with Esping-Andersen's regime typology but corresponding to earlier findings for the 1990s (Svallfors 1997; Dallinger 2010), Sweden and Norway do not form a specific social-democratic regime and Austria and West Germany do not belong to a unique conservative world of welfare attitudes (mean=3.7; SD=1.1/3.5; SD=1.1). Further, challenging the regime hypothesis, the UK does not fit into the liberal pattern, and only the Czech Republic deviates from the other post-socialist countries.

7 Unemployment rates correspond to the International Labor Organization (ILO) definition of "the share of the labor force that is without work but available for and seeking employment."

In the 1990s and 2000s, the UK shows distinctly higher preferences for state redistribution (mean=3.7, SD=1.1) compared to the US (mean=2.8, SD=1.2), NZ (mean=3.2, SD=1.2) and AU (mean=3.2, SD=1.2) and thus fits into the European social democratic and conservative WFS regime. The British deviation from the liberal pattern might be interpreted from the country's positioning in the European cultural area, that is, by the historical tradition and the deep impact of the British Labor Party. Nonetheless, the British Labor Party is considered less egalitarian than social democratic parties in other European countries (Heffernan 2000), and the country looks back to an era of extensive liberal policies during Thatcherism (e.g., Hall and Jacques 1983). Therefore, the British welfare state has been characterized as collectivistic and individualistic (Ginsburg 1992, 104). This double character is mirrored in other British views of social inequality. On the one hand, high support for state redistribution and the critique of income inequality indicate egalitarian views.<sup>8</sup> The comparably low approval of the state to support the unemployed and poor demonstrates the dominance of the principle of individualism<sup>9</sup> on the other hand (for a comprehensive comparison, see Edlund and Svallfors 2011).

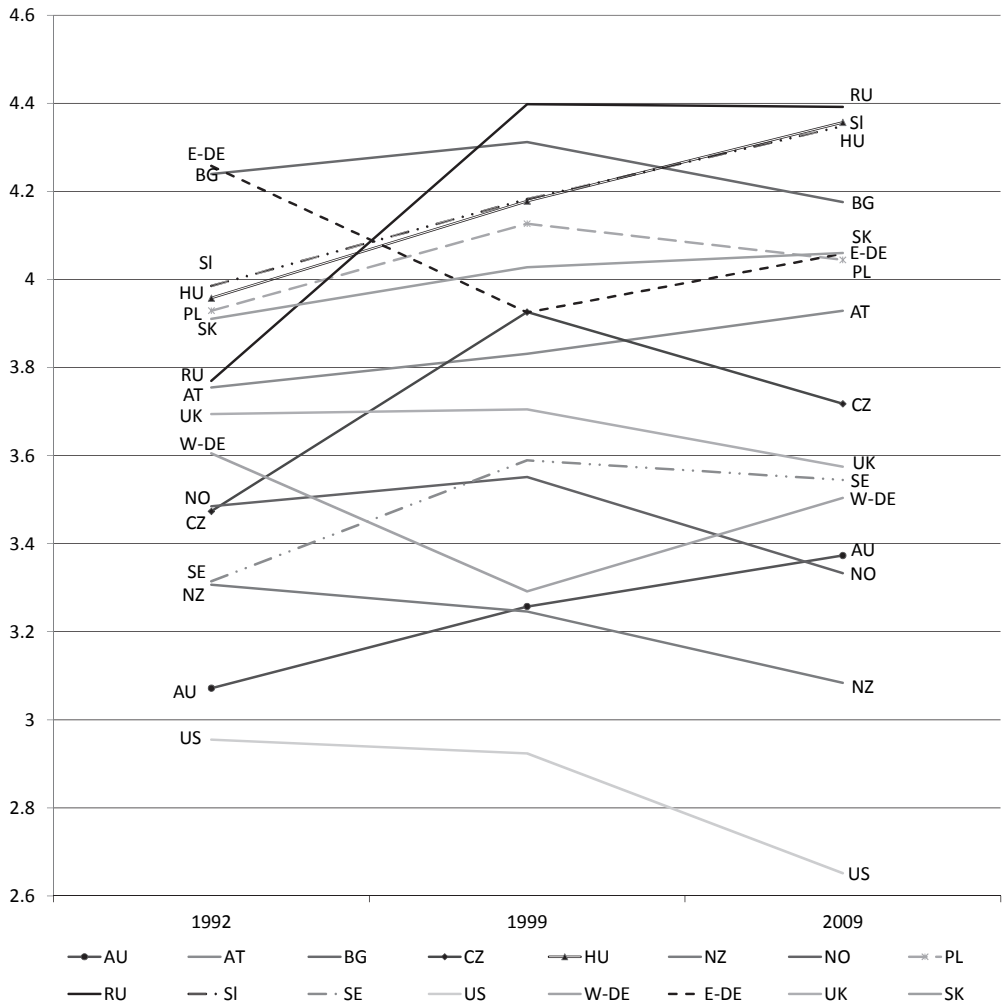
In accordance with previous findings, support for state redistribution in Scandinavia is distinctly lower than one might expect based on the high level of state intervention, supporting the notion of "saturation" for the extended period throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Particularly in Norway, the average support for state redistribution decreases during the course of the 2000s, whereas in Sweden approval of state redistribution increases slightly throughout the 1990s. However, Sweden and Norway are likely to support state assistance for the unemployed and the poor<sup>10</sup>; thus, the saturation thesis is limited to a rejection of *further* state redistribution and does not consider a general refusal of state intervention. Within the ideal types of the conservative and social democratic WFS, Austria with the highest approval of state redistribution at all three time points (mean=3.8; SD=1.1) is positioned in-between the Western and Eastern European countries. This finding corresponds to previous research for the 1990s and goes back to the deep impact of the Social Democratic Party in Austria, which covers a comparably broader left-wing political spectrum compared to Germany (e.g., Haller et al. 2015). Despite these peculiarities, similarities between the neighbors Austria and West Germany are obvious in people's high dissatisfaction with the unequal distribution of incomes and high approval for the state to support the unemployed and the poor.<sup>11</sup>

8 Income differences are too large (1 to 5): Mean 1992=1.9; Mean 1999=1.9; Mean 2009=2.0

9 Decent living for the unemployed (1 to 5): Mean 2009=2.9/ Spend less on the poor (1 to 5): Mean 2009=3.5

10 Decent living for the unemployed (1 to 5): Mean in SE 2009=2.0; Mean in NO 2009=2.1  
Spend less on the poor (1 to 5): Mean in SE 2009=3.9; Mean in NO 2009=4.0

11 Income differences are too large (1 to 5): Mean in W-DE 1992=1.9; W-DE 1999=2.1; W-DE 2009=1.7  
Mean in AT 1992=1.9; W-DE 1999=1.8; W-DE 2009=1.7  
Decent living for the unemployed (1 to 5): Mean in W-DE 2009=2.5; Mean in AT 2009=2.6  
Spend less on the the poor (1 to 5): Mean in W-DE 2009=3.9; Mean in AT 2009=3.9



Source: ISSP Module on Social Inequality 1992, 1999, 2009

Figure 1 "It is the responsibility of the state to reduce income differences" throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Means, 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)

The Czech Republic is positioned in-between the West and East European countries (mean=3.8; SD=1.2), with the exception of the late 1990s when the Czech Republic approximated the other CEE countries. Including the Czech Republic, the variation among the CEE countries is similar to the variation among the liberal type. Taking into account further attitudes, it is clear that the Czech Republic is also comparably less critical of the prevailing income gaps by the beginning of the 1990s,<sup>12</sup> and with Slovakia and East Germany, less

12 Income differences are too large (1 to 5): Mean in 1992=2.1

often wants the government to provide a decent living for the unemployed.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, Bulgaria shows the highest support for state redistribution, which, by the end of the 1990s, includes Russia. However, as Slovakia and Hungary share similar egalitarian views, the Visegrád countries do not form a specific group of welfare state attitudes. Moreover, East Germany still seems to fit the pattern of CEE countries, although East Germany's support for state redistribution decreased during the course of the 1990s.

Taking into account these results, the ranking in Hypothesis 1 is partly confirmed. Overall, findings from post-hoc tests (Games Howell, Dunnett's T3, Tanhame's T2) show significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) of people's attitudes towards state redistribution across liberal, conservative, social-democratic and post-socialist welfare states. In accordance with the expected ranking, the post-socialist countries, on average, show the highest and the liberal welfare states the lowest support for state redistribution. However, contradicting hypothesis 1, citizens of social democratic welfare states are less prone to redistribution than people of conservative welfare states (with the exception of the late 1990s). Even more, by the 2000s the social democratic welfare states, on average, do not differ from radical welfare states. According to the expectation in Hypothesis 1a, the US is the least likely to support state redistribution throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Hence, the radical welfare states (AU, NZ, UK) significantly differ from the liberal US. Since the end of the 1990s, the rudimentary state-paternalistic welfare states (BG, RU) have shown significant higher support for state redistribution than the state-led conservative-corporatist type (HU, PL, SI, SK, E-DE, CZ). However, in contrast to the expected between-country variation (Hypothesis 1b), the Czech Republic, and not East Germany and Slovenia, show the least support for state redistribution.

## Public Support for State Redistribution and its Relation to Inequality and Economic Prosperity: Normative Accommodation and Government Protection

According to the regime hypothesis, public support for state redistribution is stable in Western democracies, whereas the CEE countries should adapt to one world of welfare capitalism (Esping-Andersen 1996). However, Figure 1 already indicated the remaining differences between Western and the CEE countries and an overall increase in the variation across all 15 selected countries during the course of the 1990s and 2000s (the range of means in 1992 is from 3 to 4.3 and in 2009 from 2.7 to 4.4). Approval of state redistribution significantly increased in Russia and to a lower degree in Sweden and Poland in the course of the 1990s. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, approval also increased in Hungary and Slovenia. The opposite trend can be observed in the US, the UK, New Zealand and Norway. In Germany, approval of state redistribution decreased in the 1990s and again increased in the 2000s. A reverse-U trend occurred in the Czech Republic.

These results illustrate the complex patterns of temporal changes and continuities. Do the processes of a normative accommodation and/or the government protection thesis

13 mean=between 2.2 and 2.4 in comparison to 1.8 to 1.9 in the other CEE countries

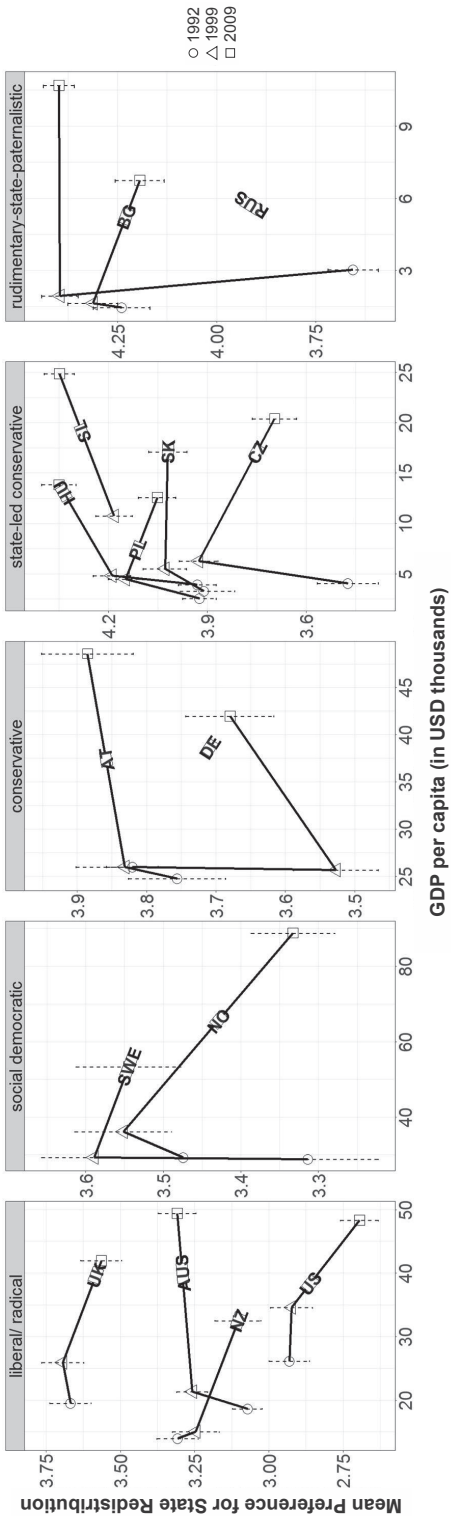
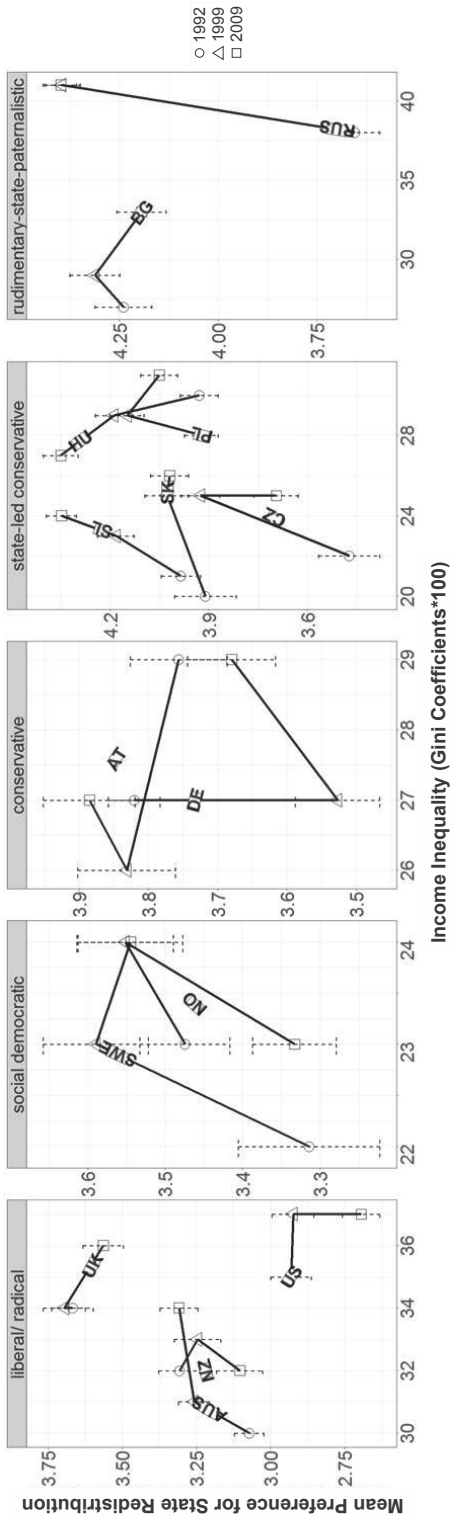
help understand them? Based on the government protection thesis, Table 4 indicates that the level of economic prosperity explains cross-country variation in the support for state redistribution, particularly by the end of the 1990s and in the 2000s. Lower affluence goes hand in hand with higher approval of state redistribution. Nonetheless, the effect of the level of unemployment diminishes, if a country's level of economic prosperity is controlled for and there is no evidence that the amount of social spending is associated with people's views of state redistribution (see Hypothesis 3). In contrast, the level of income inequality has no verifiable impact; however, its changes across time matter. Increases of inequality are associated with a more distinct public support for state redistribution. The negative correlation by the end of the 1990s is an effect of the country sample composition; it can be explained by the slight decreases in income inequality in the CEE countries.

Looking at the cross-country trends in more detail, a delayed decrease in public support for state redistribution during the course of the 2000s solely took place in the most unequal Western countries: the US and the UK (see Figure 2). However, Australia in particular deviates from this pattern by increasing support for state redistribution. Thus, processes of normative accommodation describe the trends in the US and UK and not, as expected in Hypothesis 2, the trends in countries with the highest increase and a high level of inequality (Russia, Bulgaria and Hungary). Overall, there is no evidence that growing income gaps are related to a delayed decrease in approval of state redistribution. The overall dominant pattern considers rather stable and minor but significant increasing public support for state redistribution across time ( $F(2, 55143)=79.974$ ,  $p<0.000$ ; mean 1992=3.6, mean 1999=3.8, mean 2009=3.7).

*Table 4* Correlation (Spearman's rho) between support for state redistribution and selected macro-indicators across 15 countries

	Income inequality			Change in inequality			Economic prosperity			Unemployment			Social spending		
	'92	'99	'09	'92	'99	'09	'92	'99	'09	'92	'99	'09	'92	'99	'09
Support for state redistribution	-.09**	-.03**	-.03**	.19**	-.21**	.14**	-.15**	-.32**	-.31**	.07**	.22**	.14**	.03**	-.03**	-.03**
Throughout the 1990s and 2000s	-.04**			.01			-.24**			0.12**			-0.01		
	change in income inequality controlled for level of inequality						controlled for unemployment			controlled for GDP per capita			controlled for GDP per capita		
Partial correlations				.17** -.27** .16**			-.07** -.20** -.27**			.05** .01 -.08**			.16** .09** .09**		

Statistical Significance: \*\*  $p \leq .001$ , \*  $p \leq .01$





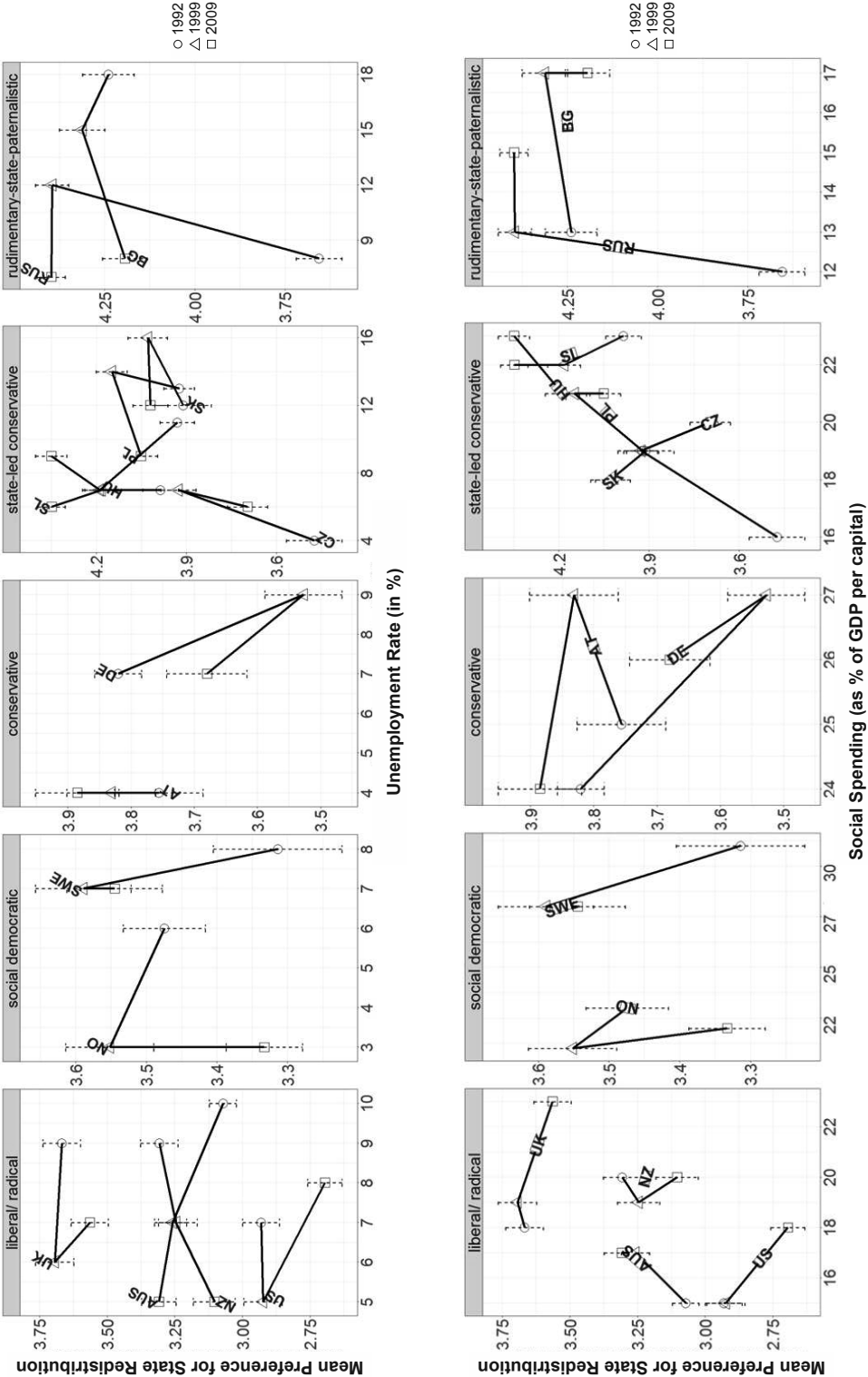


Figure 2 Cross-country patterns of the relation between support for state redistribution and selected macro-indicators throughout the 1990s and 2000s

Expanding the government protection thesis, it was further expected that the level of economic prosperity, unemployment, and the amount of social spending explain the differences across the CEE countries (see Hypothesis 3). As shown earlier, support for state redistribution is significantly highest in Bulgaria and Russia since the end of the 1990s. However, approval of state redistribution is also high and increased in the wealthiest CEE countries of Slovenia and the Czech Republic and the less wealthy countries of Russia, Hungary, and Slovakia (in Bulgaria, approval remained stable at a high level). In addition, the levels of social spending and unemployment and their developments across time do not explain the variation across CEE countries and within-country trends in the sense of the government protection thesis (see Figure 2). On these grounds, the conclusion that especially “in transition countries high public expectations for state action aimed at more equality are the result of a weak economy [rather] than of post-socialist ideology” (Dallinger 2010, 345) seems to fall short from a time-comparative perspective. The level of economic prosperity explains country differences between the CEE countries and the Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries outside Europe but not the heterogeneity across the CEE countries. Overall, Figure 2 illustrates trends of rising prosperity going hand in hand with both decreasing and increasing support for state redistribution.

## Summary and Conclusion

Against the background of varying trends of increasing income inequalities in 15 Western and CEE countries (on different levels), this chapter raised the question of potential changes in people’s public support for state redistribution in the course of the 1990s and 2000s. The paper aimed to identify the explanatory power of three hypotheses: (1) the regime hypothesis, (2) the hypothesis of normative accommodation, and (3) the government protection thesis.

Analyses of data from the Social Inequality Module of the ISSP show that public support for state redistribution differs between Western and CEE countries. The preference for state redistribution is lowest in liberal welfare states outside Europe and remains highest in CEE countries. In accordance with previous research, these findings support the assumption that the level of economic prosperity explains country differences between East European and Western countries. However, restricting the government protection thesis, economic prosperity does not explain the between-country differences in the CEE countries, and rising economic prosperity in the 1990s and 2000s does not go along with a decrease in public support for state redistribution. In addition, previous research has shown that status dependency regarding the preference for state redistribution – people in a lower social position are more prone to support redistributive policies than people in a higher social position – is also a characteristic of Western societies (e.g., Örkenyi and Székelyi 2000). These results leave doubts that rising economic prosperity in CEE countries in the future will lead to less need for government aid in people’s views. Simultaneously, evidence of delayed processes of normative accommodation concerns only liberal countries where income inequality is comparatively high and increased in the course of the 1990s and 2000s.

Thus, a combination of the government protection thesis and the regime hypothesis seems appropriate to explain the fundamental differences between Western and Eastern European societies. The overall temporal pattern shows rather stable and minor increasing support for state redistribution in the course of the 1990s and 2000s. These findings support the thesis of historically grown dominant values. Nevertheless, the regime hypothesis tells only part of the story. Contrary to the classical regime typology of Esping-Andersen (1990), citizens of social democratic welfare states are less prone to redistribution than people in conservative welfare states. According to the extended typology of Castles and Mitchell (1993), the radical welfare states (AU, NZ, UK) show significantly higher support for state redistribution than the liberal US. Findings regarding the CEE countries support the typologies of state-led conservative and rudimentary state-paternalistic types (Fenger 2007; Kollmorgen 2009): since the end of the 1990s and early 2000s the approval of state redistribution is significantly higher in the latter. Thus, the two typologies might be instructive for future research.

Despite these inconsistencies, the analysis of deviations from the three ideal-typical theoretical approaches is fruitful for investigating public support for state redistribution from a country- and time-comparative perspective. Within this framework, future research should concentrate on the question of the CEE countries' potential adaption to liberal, conservative, and social democratic orientations and analyze differences between age cohorts and changes in distributive norms and values. In addition, for the Western European context, this paper poses important questions for future research: Regarding the claimed end of the former universal social democratic welfare state, the question arises what the notion of "saturation" in individual Scandinavian countries really implies and if the attitudinal differences between Norway and Sweden will continue. In the liberal pattern, the borderline case of Great Britain and deviating increasing support for state redistribution in Australia are of specific concern. Are Great Britain and Australia going to form a group of individualistic-collectivistic orientations distinctly different from the US and New Zealand?

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## Appendix: Macro-indicators across countries and time (rounded values)

Macro-indicators	US	UK	AU	NZ	NO	SE	DE**	AT	RU	PL	BG	HU	SI	SK	CZ
Gini coefficient after taxes and transfers*															
av. 1990–1995	35	34	30	32	23	22	27	29	38	28	27	30	21	20	22
av. 1997–2001	37	34	31	33	24	23	27	26	41	29	29	29	23	25	25
av. 2007–2011	37	36	34	32	23	24	29	27	41	31	33	27	24	26	25
Gini coefficient before taxes and transfers*															
av. 1990–1995	47	51	44	45	40	46	46	49	44	42	28	49	33	38	39
av. 1997–2001	49	53	48	48	42	47	47	43	47	48	30	50	37	45	45
av. 2007–2011	50	54	52	47	40	47	51	46	53	48	34	47	41	42	45
GDP per capita **															
av. 1990–1995	26146	19512	18628	13910	29337	28936	26019	24778	3045	2531	1474	3904	X	3271	4062
av. 1997–2001	34573	25906	21314	15012	36202	29374	25682	26012	1955	4478	1640	4791	10752	5483	6262
av. 2007–2011	48325	41981	49453	32529	88775	53390	41981	48590	10699	12572	6761	13846	24872	17119	20420
Changes in GDP per capita (percentage points compared to earlier period)**															
1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 1990s	+24	+25	+13	+7	+19	+1	-1	+5	-56	+43	+10	+19	X	+40	+35
End of the 1990s to the 2000s	+28	+38	+57	+54	+59	+45	+39	+46	+82	+64	+76	+65	+57	+68	+69
Public social protection expenditure % of GDP***															
av. 1990–1995	15	18	15	20	23	31	24	25	12	19	13	X	23	19	16
2000	15	19	17	19	21	28	27	27	13	21	17	21	22	18	19
av. 2007–2011	18	23	17	20	22	28	26	24	15	21	17	23	22	18	20
Unemployment rates %***															
av. 1991–1995	7	9	10	9	6	8	7	4	8	13	18	11	7	12	4
av. 1997–2001	5	6	7	7	3	7	9	4	12	14	15	7	7	16	7
av. 2007–2011	8	7	5	5	3	7	7	4	7	9	8	9	6	12	6

\*\* West and East Germany together

Sources: \*Solt 2009; Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID); \*\*The World Bank; \*\*\*ILO 2014; World Social Protection Report 2014/15